



Agenda Attachment # 2 to Agenda Item # V.3.

TO: Cheryl King

FROM: John Crocker

DATE: May 15, 2008

SUBJECT: Transit Planning Board – Initial Strategic Guidance on Governance

In order to develop a strawman on a governance structure for the Transit Planning Board, staff requests strategic guidance on key issues. This paper presents staff's understanding of the overarching environment (the BIG IDEAS), the objectives of what a new governance structure should accomplish, and some general principles and characteristics that the Board has expressed for inclusion in a regional transit governance structure. Staff is preparing a strawman scenario to be discussed individually and through small groups of board members.

Overarching Framework

The two key issues in framing governance discussion are equity and governmental roles. These issues are two of the prisms through which most other governance decisions are filtered, not just in transit, but in many other types of governance discussions. By acknowledging these two fundamental issues, staff hopes the Board recognizes that the transit governance issue in the Atlanta region is not intractable and can be resolved.

Equity

The major themes in the Atlanta region are geographic, demographic, and financial equity.

Governmental Roles

Defining the appropriate roles for local, regional, and state decision making is a challenge to framing a new governance model.

Objectives

There is a need to have a regional transit structure that enables the region to strategically make investment decisions regarding regional transit and then implement those decisions. It appears that the desired governance structure should be able to allow us to answer or address the following issues:

- Leverage additional funding at all levels
- Strategically phase a transit construction program
- Implement Large Scale Investment Decisions
- Resolve outstanding issues facing the regional right now

These are described in a bit more detail below.

Leverage Additional Funding

The region seems to have difficulties at the federal and state level with public transit funding due to uncoordinated priorities. Instead of deciding strategically which project has the best chance through the federal process and what the regional priorities are in the state conversation, the region is left at a disadvantage when trying to leverage additional funding for transit at the federal, state, and local levels. Additionally, identifying which projects are the most likely candidates for private financing or partnering with the private sector could potentially help leverage even private financing for specific projects, but in the absence of a strategic decision making structure, this opportunity is being missed.

Implement Large Scale Investment Decisions

The region has had some difficulties in identifying and agreeing upon how to implement and then operate and maintain major transit infrastructure. This inability of our current governance structure to help us resolve these issues has hampered, and will continue to hamper, the region's ability to not only construct new projects, but also to identify where to direct new funding.

Framework for Resolving Current Issues

There are several outstanding issues that the region has had difficulties in resolving. A new governance structure should help provide a framework for resolving some of these issues. The biggest impact is that decisions that could be taken at a lower level such as service coordination issues, paratransit issues, etc are being pushed up to a political/policy level because there is no established framework for resolving these questions on a regular basis. Some of these issues being pushed up to the policy level include:

- Fare Issues
- Regional Service Coordination Issues
- Regional Public Transit Data Collection and Dissemination Issues
- Regional Transit Project Coordination

Principles and Characteristics

This section could be considered to define the more specifically some of the principles or characteristics some or all members of the Board have expressed as being necessary or desired elements of a successful governance structure. In other words, these are areas where staff wants to confirm that the board has given some guidance with the understanding that these characteristics will heavily influence the strawman proposal developed.

Pay-to-Play

One consistent message many of the Transit Planning Board members have stressed is that there needs to be consideration in the governance structure between the amount of funding providing and the level of influence on the regional public transit governance process.

Flexibility

Whatever arrangement is agreed upon, it must be a flexible arrangement. Flexibility can be seen in many ways, but one part of flexibility includes how to address the varying geographic areas agencies in this region cover. Perhaps of primary importance is the flexibility of a governance structure to absorb, manage, and disburse new funding. Flexibility would also influence governance structure in

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that in addition to any new sources of traditional tax funding introduced into the region, some consideration might also be how to accommodate new private investment or other innovative funding options. In short, flexibility would influence the governance structure by developing a proposal that is able to adapt over time to the changing needs of the region whether that is through a change in the geographic or political size of the region or managing several different new funding streams.

Accountability

One area that has frequently been stressed is the need for accountability either through performance monitoring of delivery and through some measure of being accountable to the tax payers and all other stakeholders for funds expended. This characteristic implies that a governance proposal would have an explicit mechanism for providing a measure of oversight and/or transparency within the structure.

Decisions Made at Appropriate Level

This principle would ensure that the strong historic precedent of home rule in Georgia is respected. In other words, local decisions would be locally decided, but decisions of regional nature would need to be resolved at a regional level in an agreed upon manner and the governance structure should have some way to differentiate between decisions of local and regional nature.

Customer Focused

Some TPB members have indicated the providing a customer focused public transit system is a priority and this focus should influence the governance structure. In particular making sure the governance structure is not only accountable to the taxpayers and residents of the region, but specifically for the riders and users of the system.

Preserve and Maintain Investment

This principle would mean that the region would agree that it is necessary to protect and maintain its existing investment in public transit infrastructure. This means maintaining the system in a state of good repair so that its long-term health can be maintain and putting into the governance structure some way of ensuring that existing investments are not compromised through the decision making process. In others words, finding some way to incorporate the balance between demands for system expansion and needs for system maintenance.

Next Steps

Staff requests guidance from the board:

**A:
Continued Development
and analysis of strawman
governance proposal
based upon major state
legislative change to
existing actors?**

**B:
Continued Development
and analysis of strawman
governance proposal
based upon little or no
state legislative change to
existing actors?**

While a strawman developed could manage a variety of new funding sources discussed; staff would like guidance on assumptions that the enabling state legislative charters of existing agencies and other stakeholders involved in transportation in this region with regards to general mission, roles, structure, broad responsibilities, oversight and board composition will either have major changes or little or no changes.

Once staff has direction, they can work individually with board members or through a small working group some board members have indicated they would like to have to present and refine an initial strawman of governance structure to bring to the July, 2008 Planning and Funding Committee Meeting.